

We, the undersigned community organizations, parents, educators, and labor leaders demand 100% safety in order to reopen Little Rock schools. Our students, our community, and our educators deserve an educational environment that does not sacrifice the safety and lives of all those involved for the expediency of reopening the economy. We are not willing to risk the lives of our children, their families, and the educators who serve them in order to line the pockets of Wall Street.

Covid-19 has disproportionately affected and killed black and brown people at a rate much higher than white Americans; a rush to open schools this fall means that the lives of people of color will be the cost of jump-starting our economy- that is categorically unacceptable. Our children deserve safe schools, that means not only safety from the possible infection of Covid-19, but safety from the violence of poverty and systemic racism that infects our community.

The cost of reopening our schools with 100% safety is nothing compared to the value of our children's lives. As a reminder, the banks have received over \$14 trillion dollars since the start of the pandemic-- If we as a society can afford to give away \$14 trillion dollars to big banks, then we can surely afford to provide a safe environment for the children of Little Rock and of Arkansas. Our children's lives are priceless and no cost should be prohibitive in ensuring their safety.

The only way to ensure these demands is for an immediate return to local control for LRSD. In addition, we demand direct community, parent, and educator ownership of the process to reopen our schools. We deserve to be at the table in all discussions and decisions involving our lives. Our demands are attached.

- Little Rock Education Association
- Grassroots Arkansas
- National Association of Social Workers-AR
- Central AR- Democratic Socialists of Arkansas
- Our Community Our Schools
- Arkansans for World Class Education
- Arkansas Community Organizations
- Arkansas Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival
- Barry Block

OneLRSD Coalition Demands for Our Public Schools in Arkansas

*With Addendum

1. ***We Demand the immediate release of Little Rock School District (LRSD) and all other public school districts placed under state control for “academic distress” from the state of Arkansas.***

State takeovers remove democratic power and autonomy of students, families, educators, administrators, and communities, particularly as it relates to control over district budgets.

2. ***We Demand the immediate reinstatement of the seven member elected school board in the LRSD. Additionally, we reject the imposition of a new nine member school board zoning map for the LRSD, as this should be decided upon by an elected school board and the constituents of the district.***

In 2014, the LRSD community elected a seven member school board willing to work together on behalf of the needs of the entire LRSD community; regrettably, on January 28, 2015, the Arkansas State Board of Education (ARSBOE) deposed this Board. Following the results of the 2020 US Census, state and municipal leaders will likely redraw the school zones and other district boundaries in 2021. It is premature and irresponsible to draw those lines prior to obtaining the results of the 2020 Census.

3. ***We Demand a reopening plan and budget that addresses the needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic for each public school district in our state. Students, families, and public school educators and administrators shall provide input and have decision making power for this plan.***

The ARSBOE, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), and Governor shall no longer exclude students, families, community members, and public school educators from the decision-making processes surrounding the reopening of schools. Any decisions made in relation to reopening schools will be made in tandem with these groups. Suggested components for any re-entry plan should include but not be limited to:

- A. Audit: Procedures for materials and manipulatives
 - I. Develop a list of all schools and the available number of classrooms in each school.
 - II. Develop a list of the maximum number of students each classroom can hold and still observe CDC recommended social distancing protocols.
 - III. Determine the maximum number of students each classroom can serve per class period using CDC recommended social distancing protocols.
 - IV. Determine and publish the percentage of students each school is able to serve relative to available space and total school population while maintaining social distancing guidelines recommended by CDC.

B. PPE and Procedures Related to Reopening Schools:

- I. Hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes: LRSD shall provide hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes for each classroom every day that school is in session, as well as provide hand sanitizer stations at all building entrances, exits, bathrooms, and cafeterias.
- II. Masks: For each site, LRSD shall provide three non-surgical, disposable masks per day for all staff and students while school is in session. Faculty, staff, and students can utilize their personal masks if they so choose.
- III. Plastic face shield: LRSD shall provide a plastic face shield for all teachers.
- IV. Plexiglass Shields: LRSD shall provide adequate, moveable plexiglass shields for all teachers in order to hold small group sessions in class; for all School Psychology Specialists; for all Speech Language Pathologists; and for any Occupational Therapists or Physical Therapists who request them. These shields must be able to stand alone on top of desks or tables. For those providing services to students, three-sided plexiglass shields shall be issued for every student per class.
- V. Temperature Screenings per Site: Each person shall have their temperature checked with a no touch thermometer upon entering the site each day. LRSD shall provide all necessary staff and equipment to facilitate such testing.
 - a) An aide shall check the temperature for all bus riders boarding any LRSD bus.
- VI. The COVID-19 Contact Questionnaire currently in use by LRSD shall be mandated for every person entering and exiting the building each day. Individuals who answer "Yes" to any question will not be able to enter LRSD sites until they have self-quarantined for a period of 14 days and have tested negative for COVID-19.
 - a) Contact Tracing: Contact tracing per CDC guidelines shall be confirmed by LRSD personnel and appropriate data published immediately.

Protocol for positive high temperature check:

- a) Anyone attempting to enter an LRSD site with positive high temperature check, which is 100.4 degrees or higher per CDC guidelines, shall be immediately tested for COVID-19 and shall be isolated until they can return home.
- b) Protocols for positive COVID-19 test: In the event anyone who has entered or worked at an LRSD site tests positive for COVID-19, the affected site shall immediately close until everyone at the affected site is tested for COVID-19 (at no cost to persons tested). The site must be disinfected and remain closed for 14 days. Faculty, staff, and students may return after 14 days upon completion of a negative COVID-19 test.
- c) The District must notify the entire population of the affected site within 24 hours if and when there is a positive test result.

4. ***We Demand that the Governor, Boards of Education (state and local), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and School Districts adhere to a community/educator-driven reopening plan that ensures safe re-entry for students and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.***

At a minimum, schools must provide equitable space for social distancing; sufficient and equitable access to clean, uncontaminated water sources; personal protective equipment (PPE); hand sanitizer; soap and warm water; paper towels; temperature checks; COVID-19 screening and testing at no charge; contact tracing; isolation space to safely quarantine potential COVID-19 cases; and clean, functioning facilities with clear health and safety plans for all sites. Schools must increase custodial staff and provide training to ensure compliance with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommended guidelines.

5. ***We Demand the establishment of sustainable Community Schools through the use of culturally appropriate, practical, and evidence-based assessments and community support. No Community School shall be established without the input and inclusion of the community that it will serve.***

Currently, city leaders in Little Rock and state education administrators propose “cookie-cutter” plans for “community schools” that do not respect the diversity or autonomy of students, their families, or educators. Rather than seeking input from stakeholders and empowering them with the authority to implement informed decisions regarding their own schools, serious and inequitable overreach by political and philanthropic entities impose a “one-size-fits-all” framework on an entire community.

6. ***We Demand FREE COVID-19 testing for all students, faculty, staff, volunteers, substitute teachers, and their family members (regardless of symptomatic or asymptomatic status) and, if necessary, FREE COVID-19 treatment; moreover, district employees shall receive worker’s compensation coverage and benefits if diagnosed with COVID-19.***

7. ***We Demand needs-based support (academic, medical, social, physical, emotional, and economic) for students and families who have been exponentially challenged, traumatized, and harmed by the lack of urgent response to COVID-19 by their city, county, state, and/or federal government, particularly those already marginalized and under-supported, pre COVID-19.***

Families have been faced with evictions, homelessness, limited or no access to medical and wellness care, limited or no support for children and family members with special needs, and other real-time needs that cannot be ignored or neglected. To address this, we must boldly invest in the communities that students live in by guaranteeing:

- A. Sick pay for all

- B. Unemployment insurance for all who lose employment during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - C. Income replacement funds
 - D. Free medical access for all
 - E. Creation of new jobs in schools across job categories (as staff will be needed, and the public sector is the most stable part of the economy).
 - F. Release of all non-violent drug offenders immediately, providing counseling, rehabilitation, and re-entry programs free of charge.
 - G. Equitable housing, rehabilitation of vacant properties and closed schools, elimination of evictions and foreclosures due to lack of funds during the pandemic
 - H. Protection of voting rights and increased access to voting
 - I. Provision of stimulus money for Black and Brown owned businesses and small businesses
 - J. Provision of worker's compensation and coverage of all medical expenses for everyone who contracts COVID-19
8. ***We Demand that all districts must discontinue the use of police (including School Resource officers [SROs]), guns, and other weapons in schools throughout the state. Training and funding centered on Restorative Justice and Trauma-Informed practices, along with full-time staff positions for school nurses, guidance counselors, and licensed social workers at every site must be prioritized and reflect students' cultures and needs.***

Because police presence in schools increases student fears of victimization and creates the potential for toxic stress reactions, all districts must discontinue the use of School Resource Officers (SROs) in schools throughout the state.

9. ***We Demand districts hire licensed social workers, nurses, counselors, certified educators, and administrators who represent the population of the students they serve.***

In a time of uncertainty and instability, public school districts appear to be firing/ reducing the number of certified staff and personnel rather than retaining stability and increasing levels of support for students, families, and educators. Recruitment and retention of educators and administrators having similar life experiences as their students has proven to be effective in developing relationships and increasing the academic success of students and should be prioritized. Any funding used to support policing in schools should be reallocated immediately to create full-time staff positions for school nurses, guidance counselors, and licensed social workers at every site that provides instruction. Any additional funding needed shall be agreed upon by each public school district community.

10. ***We Demand the use of trauma-informed Culturally Relevant Curriculum, based upon the input and needs of students, educators, administrators, and school communities for each public school.***

Too many schools engage in "curriculum violence" predicated on academic programming and lessons that exclude the cultural, social, and emotional needs of students and their families (*Curriculum Violence: America's New Civil Rights Issue*: Ighodaro & Wiggan, 2010). Students' cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds, life experiences, and interests must be incorporated into classrooms and schools, and curriculum must be academically, emotionally, physically, and practically relevant. As such, social-emotional and trauma-

informed focuses must be applied, district-wide, with flexibility and adaptability. In order to meet the needs of all students in the LRSD and throughout the state, districts shall create an authentic, continuous, and specialized Equity Task Force for the most underserved students, including the following: students in need of special education services, facing homelessness, residing in transitional housing, experiencing transiency, trauma, poverty, parental incarceration, and discrimination.

11. ***We Demand that each public school district receive equitable resources through the CARES ACT, the Heroes ACT (when it becomes law) and any other COVID-19 emergency stimulus and sustainable economic support laws that are passed in Congress and state legislatures. Community members and Educators will be involved in any and all allocation/spending decisions to ensure that funding is utilized equitably.***

Wealth redistribution and targeted divestment/investment will be used to increase funding in fiscally under resourced schools. Increases to Title I and Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act (IDEA) will also be prioritized. Investments shall be equitably distributed and determined with school community members (i.e., parents, students, underserved community members, and educators).

12. ***We Demand Safe Certified Teacher/Student ratios (1:10) and Safe Teacher/Paraprofessional/Student ratios (1:1:9) in every classroom that are appropriate to the learning experience in all public schools and conform to social distances requirements per CDC guidelines.***

Additional staff members, such as interpreters for hearing impaired/deaf students, along with resources for our exceptional-needs student population will be provided to ensure equitable learning experiences for all students. Provision of adequate and equitable materials (e.g., textbooks, devices, technology [computers, free universal access to high-speed internet, and all programs needed for educational purposes]) is necessary.

13. ***We Demand that each public school in the state of Arkansas be funded equitably without regard to geographic location and student population per the Arkansas Constitution via the Lake View ruling.***

Per the Arkansas Constitution via Lake View ruling, the funding matrix for public schools must guarantee adequate and equitable education for all students. We affirm that adequacy is not enough for our students attending public schools in Arkansas and demand a guarantee of equity to all public schools.

14. ***We Demand the immediate cessation of traumatic, high-stakes standardized testing.***

Students, families, and educators are forced to prepare for standardized tests that do not accurately assess student learning, growth, or achievement. Standardized testing is used to punish students and families, particularly those who are Black, Hispanic/Latinx, LGBTQ+, experience disabilities, and those in low-income households. To be sure, standardized testing perpetuates systemic racism, and continues to traumatize and

stigmatize students and families who are not white, middle class, and/or wealthy. Standardized testing contributes to the distorted and immoral narratives concerning “good schools” vs. “bad schools” that continue to racially and economically segregate students.

15. ***We Demand a Moratorium on the opening and extension of Charter Schools in our state.***
16. ***We demand an end to all waivers related to education with the exception of waivers necessary to address a state or federal emergency declaration. Any waivers requested shall be approved by community members and educators in the community affected.***

Public school communities must inform and help decide what is needed for their schools and district.

17. ***We Demand a complete waiver of college expenses at public universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in Arkansas to exponentially increase the number of Black and Brown educators to correspond with student body percentages.***

The number of Indigenous, Black/African-American, Latinx/Hispanic American certified educators in public schools in Arkansas is disproportionately lower than their European-American or White colleagues. We are aware that resources for post-secondary education are often limiting factors for Indigenous, Black/African-American, Latinx/Hispanic American persons and that their student loan debts and ability to pay are significantly, disproportionately high and inequitable. Recruitment and retention of these groups will be prioritized, and educational opportunities shall be provided through these waivers.